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SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICA PUBLICLY CONFIRMS MBEKI-BUSH MEETING

11. (U) Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad yesterday confirmed to reporters that President Mbeki will be meeting President Bush at the White House on 8 December. Pahad admitted that the agenda has not been finalized, but added that free trade negotiations will inevitably be on the agenda as well as the threat of terrorism. In both areas, South Africa has "no major problems (with the United States)...just differences." He also said that South Africa's relations with the United States were good, despite differences of opinion on the Middle East and the need for greater multilateralism in world affairs.

12. (U) Regarding the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), Pahad told reporters that South Africa cannot afford to sign an "asymmetrical" free trade agreement. Pahad added that Beijing is easier to deal with (than the United States) because "the Chinese leadership has made it clear that they understand they cannot sustain a relationship based on colonial relations." He went on to list the billions of dollars that China has set aside to enhance trade relations with the African continent as proof. Pahad pointed out, however, that the Department of Trade and Industry will continue talks in an effort to look for other ways to strengthen economic relations with the U.S. if a free trade agreement is not signed in the near-future.

13. (U) Post has faxed text of Pahad's speech to AF/S.  
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